

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY S/S-O:RKUCHEL

APPROVED BY S/S-O:RKUCHEL

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO THE WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 122197

EXDIS

TOSEC 20

WHITE HOUSE PASS SALZBURG

FOLLOWING REPEAT BONN 9212 ACTION STATE 10 JUNE 1974. QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 09212

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: BONN'S VIEW OF LOWER SAXONY

REF: HAMBURG 666

1. FOLLOWING IS OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE LAND
ELECTION IN LOWER SAXONY WHICH TOOK PLACE JUNE 9.
CONGEN HAMBURG HAS REPORTED THE DETAILS SEPARATELY. I
THOUGHT THAT AN OVERVIEW MIGHT BE OF USE, HOWEVER, GIVEN
YOUR UPCOMING TALKS WITH GENSCHER TOMORROW, FOR THE
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ELECTION WILL BE MUCH ON HIS MIND. YOU MAY WISH TO

CONSIDER CONGRATULATING GENSCHER ON HIS PARTY'S HAVING ACHIEVED 7.1 PERCENT OF THE VOTE (AS COMPARED WITH 4.4 PERCENT IN THE 1970 LAND ELECTION). THE FDP'S ACHIEVEMENT OF OVER 5 PERCENT MEANS THAT IT WILL NOW BE REPRESENTED IN THE LOWER SAXONY LANDTAG FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1970.

2. SUMMARY: FROM THE BONN PERSPECTIVE THE ELECTION IN LOWER SAXONY (SEE HAMBURG 666) HAS BEEN OF GREAT INTEREST BUT THE RESULTS CANNOT BE USED AS A RELIABLE GUIDE TO THE FUTURE. THE SPD CAN CONTINUE ON THE COURSE IT HAS SET ITSELF WHILE THE CDU AND FDP AGAIN MULL OVER THE PROBLEMS THAT HAVE BESET THEM IN RECENT YEARS. END SUMMARY.

3. THOUGH THE FINAL FIGURES ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE BECAUSE OF A COMPUTER BREAKDOWN IN HANNOVER, THE CDU (WITH APPROXIMATELY 48.9 PERCENT) AND THE FDP (WITH APPROXIMATELY 7.1 PERCENT) CAN LEGITIMATELY CLAIM SUCCESS WHILE THE OSTENSIBLE LOSER, THE SPD (WITH APPROXIMATELY 43 PERCENT), TOO CAN CLAIM "SUCCESS" IN THAT IT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY CONTINUE TO GOVERN IN LOWER SAXONY (THOUGH NOW WITH THE FDP) DESPITE THE PARTY'S LOW FORTUNES JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO AT THE TIME OF BRANDT'S RESIGNATION. ALSO, THE SPD'S LOSSES ARE LESS THAN THOSE IN RECENT LOCAL ELECTIONS AND THUS MAY PERHAPS LATER TURN OUT TO HAVE BEEN A SIGNIFICANT TURN UPWARD IN THE SPD'S FORTUNES.

4. BUT WHATEVER NATIONAL MEANING THE SPD'S NEW MANAGEMENT READS INTO THE ELECTION, THERE IS NO APPARENT NEED TO CHANGE DRASTICALLY THE POLICY AND TACTICS IT HAS SET ITSELF FROM NOW UNTIL THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION IN 1976.

5. FOR THE CDU AND THE FDP, HOWEVER, THE ELECTION DOES POSE PROBLEMS. FOR THE FDP IT IS THE OLD CURSE OF IDENTITY. IT DID EASILY SURMOUNT THE 5 PERCENT THRESHOLD IT FAILED TO CROSS FOUR YEARS AGO, BUT ITS 7.1 PERCENT IS A FAR CRY FROM THE 8.5 PERCENT IT ACHIEVED

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IN LOWER SAXONY IN THE FEDERAL ELECTION OF 1972, AND ONCE AGAIN ITS GAINS FAILED TO MATCH SPD LOSSES THUS CONFIRMING AT THE VOTING BOOTH A TREND NOTED IN OPINION POLLS THAT THE FDP IS IDENTIFIED MORE AND MORE AS A TWIN OF THE SPD.

6. FOR THE CDU THERE IS, AGAIN, THE OLD CURSE OF LEADERSHIP. IT IS THE GENERAL VIEW AMONG POLITICIANS

IN BONN THAT THE BEST PERFORMER BY FAR IN LOWER SAXONY WAS HELMUT SCHMIDT, WHILE ONE OF THE POOREST WAS HELMUT KOHL, CHAIRMAN OF THE CDU AND CURRENT BEST-BET TO BE THE CDU'S CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE IN 1976. THUS, WHILE THE CDU ALL BUT CARRIED THE DAY, THERE IS THE FEELING WITHIN THE PARTY THAT THE RECENT DISARRAY WITHIN THE SPD AND ITS LOW STANDING IN THE OPINION OF THE VOTERS WOULD HAVE LED TO A COMPLETE CDU VICTORY IN LOWER SAXONY IF THE PARTY'S NATIONAL LEADERSHIP WERE NOT SO INEFFECTIVE.

7. THE SOLUTION TO GENSCHER'S PROBLEM IS CLEAR: THE FDP MUST DEFINE ITSELF MORE CLEARLY AND THUS DISTANCE ITSELF FROM THE SPD. BUT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO DO

THAT AND AT THE SAME TIME KEEP THE COALITION WITH THE SPD EFFECTIVE. THE FACT THAT BRANDT WAS MORE POPULAR THAN THE SPD IN 1972 DID MUCH TO EXPLAIN FDP SUCCESSES THEN BECAUSE A VOTE FOR THE FDP WAS PRECISELY A VOTE FOR BRANDT WITHOUT SOCIALISM. BUT THAT WILL PROBABLY NOT BE THE CASE WITH SCHMIDT IN 1976 AND THEREFORE THE FDP MAY BE FORCED TO MAKE SOME NOISES ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A COALITION WITH THE CDU IN ORDER ONCE MORE TO ESCAPE GOING UNDER AS IT ALMOST DID WHEN IT WAS CONSIDERED A PALE SHADOW OF THE CDU IN THE MID 60'S.

8. THE SOLUTION FOR THE CDU/CSU IS NOT CLEAR: IT HAS NO REALLY EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGNER IN ITS NATIONAL LEADERSHIP--EXCEPT STRAUSS AND THEN ONLY IN BAVARIA. IF IT HAD ONE HE COULD PROBABLY GET THE NOMINATION ONLY BY PLAYING OFF THE COUNTER-FORCES WITHIN THE PARTY SO THAT HE COULD NOT CAMPAIGN ON MUCH OF A PLATFORM EXCEPT THE VAGUELY NEGATIVE ONE OF PROMISING TO GOVERN BETTER THAN

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THE SPD. THUS, FOR THE CDU THE QUESTION OF WHO IS STILL TIED TO THE QUESTION OF WHITHER, AND AS LONG AS IT CAN ANSWER NEITHER IT CANNOT EFFECTIVELY EXPLOIT THE INTRA-COALITION STRESSES OR THE SPD'S OWN INNER PROBLEMS. HILLENBRAND

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